

SERMON TITLE: "Believing Hearts, Confessing Lips, and Beautiful Feet"  
SERMON TEXT: Romans 10:5-15  
PREACHER: Rev. Kim James  
OCCASION: August 27, 2023, at First United Methodist Church

### **INTRODUCTION**

Because of my husband's health condition, I've been learning a lot about human anatomy. For example, prior to the past couple months, I never had heard of the term "mediastinum." But after a surgeon repeatedly used that word, I finally looked it up on Google. YouTube provided me a video of a British anatomy professor using a plastic model to explain all the body parts that fit in the middle portion of our chests between our lungs. Learning those basics of human anatomy helped my husband and me understand the much more complex details that the surgeon and oncologist were trying to tell us.

Christian faith is kind of like that too. There are some basics of our faith that are essential to understand before we can comprehend the more elaborate aspects of theology and doctrine. The New Testament Letter to the Romans, written by the Apostle Paul, explains some of those basic principles that we need to know. Two Sundays ago, we reviewed the importance of getting on board with God's "Spirit of life." Then, last Sunday, we reviewed how—no matter what happens—we can be "more than conquerors" because of God's love for us. In our review of Romans for today, we are going to look at chapter 10, verses 5-15. Here, Paul uses the analogy of human body parts to help explain some Christian basics about living by faith. So, I invite you to consider with me what it means to have "believing hearts, confessing lips, and beautiful feet."

### **1—BELIEVING HEART**

The starting place for every Christian is a believing heart. Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome repeats this theme over and over again. Salvation, says Paul, doesn't come through how much we know about the laws of Moses. Our spiritual well-being doesn't even come through how zealously we try to obey those laws. Instead, our justification and righteousness come through our faith in Jesus Christ. In

verse nine Paul writes, if you “believe in your heart that God raised [Jesus] from the dead, you will be saved.” In verse 11, Paul says that “no one who believes in him will be put to shame.”

We who have been in the church for a long time have heard this message of salvation by belief so often that we become numb to it. We forget what really good news it is. But for those, like Pharisee Paul, who are trying to earn their salvation through a never-ending to-do list, salvation through faith can seem like a glorious relief.

Here in Utah, in 2023, I doubt there are very many people who are trying to fulfill their spiritual longings or satisfy their ultimate desires by following every detail of the Jewish law. But I know lots of people who are caught up in trying to find salvation in what they do. Instead of practicing the rituals of an ancient Jewish culture, people we know are busy practicing the rituals of a modern, mostly secular society. In our uniquely American pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps culture, people all around us are striving to earn salvation by their own efforts. Some are not succeeding in their pursuit of happiness, and they feel like failures. Others drive themselves to the brink, in a never-ending push to achieve financial, social, relational, and recreational satisfaction.

A number of years ago, I met a fellow like that. Ted was on the fast track. With his Type-A personality, Ted was earning money and climbing the corporate ladder. He had a lovely wife and two intelligent and attractive daughters. By most accounts, he was a success. And then he had a heart attack. Lying in the hospital after a quadruple bypass, Ted decided his success wasn't all that it was cracked up to be. That's when Ted accepted Jesus as his savior. That's when Ted began to relax and put his trust in Christ alone for his salvation. That's when Ted developed a believing heart.

Whether we're guilt-ridden failures or broken-down success stories, the message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ can be great news. It's good to know that someone has already done the spiritual heavy lifting for us. It's good to know that someone has paid the price for us. It's good to know that someone has achieved the goal on our behalf. It's good to know that someone has died for us, so

that we can live both now and forever. It's good to know that Jesus' gift of salvation is available to all who have believing hearts.

## **2—CONFESSING LIPS**

After we come to believe in Jesus in our hearts, the next basic of Christian faith is confessing Christ with our lips. In verses eight through 12, you will notice that a believing heart is not silent. In verse eight Paul says, "The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart." In verse nine, Paul writes that salvation comes when we not only believe in our hearts but also confess with our lips that Jesus is Lord. Verse 10 says that the one who confesses with the mouth is saved. In verses 11 and 12, we read that the Lord is generous to all who call, and that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Paul clearly makes his point: Christian people have confessing lips.

The word "confessing" has two distinct meanings. The meaning we most often use is "admitting guilt." For sure, that kind of confessing is an important step in receiving forgiveness for sin. But another kind of confessing—the kind Paul uses here—is also important to Christians. That's the act of acknowledging our faith. We do this by reciting creeds, by calling out to God in prayer, and by affirming our faith in song. We confess with our lips during public worship services. We confess with our lips during Sunday School classes and other faith formation groups. We confess with our lips when we pray with our families before meals and during family devotions. We confess with our lips when we are all alone and we whisper a cry or shout a "Hallelujah!" in Jesus' name.

Confessing with our lips is more than what we do at church or in the privacy of our own homes, however. If our faith is a vital part of our lives, then we won't be able to refrain from speaking about it wherever we go. Confessing our faith in Christ should come as naturally to Christians as talking about our jobs or our families. Telling others about our church involvement should be at least as much a subject of conversation as conversations about our favorite sports teams, the latest movies, or what's happening in the news. I'm not talking here about high pressure sales pitches. I'm simply indicating that

our lips have a lot to say about our values, priorities, and ultimate concerns. If Jesus is a major part of our lives, then what we say and how we say it will reflect the centrality of our Christian beliefs and practice.

If the idea of initiating conversations about your faith sends chills up and down your spine, then consider this. Maybe you can bring faith into a conversation that someone else starts. You know, there are a lot of people out there who need someone to listen to them and care about them. After they have told you their troubles, wouldn't it be appropriate and natural to offer to pray for them? That's not only a way to encourage and support, but also a testimony of your own faith in a loving a strong God. Some of you have T-shirts with the name of our church or other faith-based messages. Wearing those out in public is a way of communicating what's important to you. Those of you who use Facebook and other social media platforms often share memes of various sorts. If you can share those catchy sentiments about animals, sports teams, and political opinions, then I bet you also could share memes with Bible verses and other words that point people to Jesus. We are saved not just by believing in our hearts, but also by confessing with our lips.

### **3—BEAUTIFUL FEET**

Closely associated with confessing lips are beautiful feet. These are the third essential part of our Christian anatomy. In verses 14 and 15, Paul writes about the need for Christians to get the message of Christ out to those who have not yet heard and believed. How beautiful, says Paul, are the feet of those who bring the good news of salvation. Beautiful feet do more than speak the faith of our believing hearts. Beautiful feet actively position us to reach those who have not yet turned their hearts to Christ.

When I was pastor of the United Methodist Church in Yuma, Colorado, there was a member there named Ryan. Ryan was the president of the Young Farmers organization. Ryan told me that the way to get people to Young Farmers meetings was to go to their house and pick them up. Ryan said that, if you show up at their door, they're a lot more likely to go. Well, it works the same way for getting

people to come to church. If you call them on the phone and invite them to come, they are a lot more likely to show up than if you don't. And if you offer to pick them up and bring them with you, then they will be even more likely to come. There are elderly folks who don't drive anymore and children who have no way to get here. There are even people who are just bashful about going new places by themselves. By inviting them to come with you, you could be the one who enables them to hear the good news and believe.

Beautiful feet help people come to church. And beautiful feet help people hear and believe the good news once they arrive. A number of years ago, I used to visit a church member who lived in a nursing home. Her name was Verna. Because she had dementia, Verna would ask me who I was at least every two minutes. Verna couldn't remember things very well. But one of the things from the past that she remembered and told me repeatedly was the year she taught Sunday School. She and her family had to walk to church, but, that entire year, she never missed a single Sunday in her class or in worship. Verna thought it was important to set a good example for her Sunday School students. By being faithful in worship, Verna reinforced the hearing and believing that took place in her class. I don't know what kind of shoes Verna wore that year, but I know her feet must have been beautiful.

### **CONCLUSION**

My 25-year old son fell a few months ago and broke his wrist. He had to have surgery on it, and now has a permanent screw in the scaphoid bone in his wrist. That's another anatomy term I've recently learned. Oscar just got his 2<sup>nd</sup> cast removed on Tuesday. The doctor says the bone has been healing nicely, and hopefully Oscar will regain full use. Hands and wrists are so essential in our lives.

Romans 10 reviews the essentials of salvation with bodily descriptions like that. And hopefully, Paul's little anatomy lesson will help us remember these basics of Christian faith. As the apostle writes, the salvation of Jesus Christ is available to all who have believing hearts and confessing lips. And the good news of salvation is spread by those who have beautiful feet.